United Nations A/71/862–S/2017/295

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
6 April 2017

Original: Arabic

General Assembly
Seventy-first session
Agenda item 34
The situation in the Middle East

Security Council
Seventy-second year

Identical letters dated 3 April 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I transmit to you herewith a letter from the Lebanese National Ministry of Defence responding to the allegations contained in the Israeli letter of 13 March 2017 (S/2017/216) (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex issued as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 34, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Nawaf **Salam**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Please recycle

Annex to the identical letters dated 3 April 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Comments of the Armed Forces Command regarding the letter from the Israeli enemy addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council regarding the so-called violations by Lebanon of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006)

Violations of the Blue Line, including at TP16, and in the Shab'a Farms

These violations in fact consist of Lebanese farmers and shepherds ploughing their land north of the technical fence, which remains under Israeli occupation. That has been the situation since 2000. The proposed solution is to address the issue of the areas with regard to which Lebanon maintains a claim, restore Lebanese sovereignty over those areas and operationalize the Observer Group Lebanon's monitoring of the armistice line, thereby implementing paragraphs 5 and 10 of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006).

The allegation regarding Hizbullah activity

These allegations are mendacious and baseless. All photographs presented at the trilateral meetings were of Lebanese civilians or Lebanese Army intelligence officials.

Incidents between civilians and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)

These incidents were not intended to hinder UNIFIL movement. Instead, they were caused by a misunderstanding between civilians and UNIFIL patrols, owing to those patrols' failure to grasp the importance of respecting private property and the customs of village inhabitants. The Lebanese Army is working to address these incidents in coordination with UNIFIL. It is normal that incidents of this nature should occur from time to time with the Lebanese Army, given that any military force operating among civilians may encounter incidents arising from a misunderstanding with them. The Israeli enemy's interference in these incidents therefore amounts to blatant meddling in an internal Lebanese matter.

Armed individuals

Those individuals are Lebanese citizens who hunt as a pastime and have in no way undermined security or stability. Nevertheless, the Lebanese Army arrested them because they were acting in violation of Lebanese laws that prohibit hunting in the area south of the Litani, and the Armed Forces Command recently circulated a directive as a reminder the decision to prohibit hunting in the area south of the Litani River, particularly near the Blue Line.

It should be noted that:

(a) After a thorough review of these allegations, it has emerged that, according to the UNIFIL coordination mechanism, the Lebanese Army was not notified of 70 per cent of them when they occurred. This failure casts doubt on whether the incidents actually occurred;

(b) In the trilateral meetings, the Lebanese party explained its position on the violations of which it stands accused by the Israeli party. Both parties had

previously been exchanging lists of violations and responses to the lists. However, the Israeli party has stopped submitting lists and begun to send them directly to the United Nations with the intent to deceive and divert attention from its own daily land, sea and air violations;

(c) On several occasions, the Lebanese party has presented its position on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) to United Nations officials, elucidated the issues that hinder the implementation of that resolution and made recommendations on how to address the problem. The most recent occasion was before the United Nations strategic review team at the meeting held on 18 January 2017 during its visit to Lebanon. The issues are:

- The Israeli enemy's continued occupation of the Shab'a Farms and the Lebanese part of the town of Ghajar;
- The areas with regard to which Lebanon maintains a claim, Lebanese territory that remains between the Blue Line and the international borders;
- Israeli air, sea and land violations;
- The Israeli enemy's acts of espionage, whether by means of the towers it has constructed along the Blue Line, or by means of its collaborators inside Lebanon and the Israeli espionage devices that were discovered within Lebanese territory.